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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIRST MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 4 December 1990, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. SUTRESNA (Indonesia)

- Opening of the session
- Adoption of the agenda
- Election of the Chairman and other officers for 1991
- Review of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session relating to the Disarmament Commission
- Draft provisional agenda for the 1991 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission
- Organizational matters

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

The CHAIRMAN: I declare open the 1990 organizational session, the 151st meeting of the Disarmament Commission.

As in past years, the Commission is convened today for a brief session to deal with organizational matters. They include the election of new officers for 1991, including the Chairmen of the Commission's subsidiary bodies, and the draft provisional agenda for the next substantive session, in accordance with the reform programme adopted earlier.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The CHAIRMAN: If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission agrees to adopt the provisional agenda for this organizational session, contained in document A/CN.10/L.27.

The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND OTHER OFFICERS FOR 1991

The CHAIRMAN: In accordance with the established principle of rotation for the Commission's chairmanship, the candidacy for the chairmanship for 1991 should come from the Group of Western European and Other States. I am pleased to report to the Commission that the Group of Western European and Other States has endorsed the candidacy of Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner of Austria for election to the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for 1991.

If I hear no comments, I shall take it that it is the Commission's wish that Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner of Austria be elected Chairman by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I now declare that Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner has been elected Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for 1991.

Ambassador Hohenfellner has been known as a distinguished diplomat in his own country and in United Nations diplomatic circles for many years, particularly for his valuable experience in the field of disarmament. He is currently the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations in New York. Over the past years, he has been very active in the sessions of the General Assembly and the First Committee, as well as in other important disarmament conferences and sessions of the Disarmament Commission itself. Under the leadership of Ambassador Hohenfellner, with his broad experience in the United Nations and expertise in the field of disarmament, the Disarmament Commission will, I believe, conduct its business successfully at the next substantive session in 1991. I extend Ambassador Hohenfellner my warmest congratulations and wish him every success.

Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria): It is an honour and pleasure for me to extend my sincere gratitude to all delegations, and specifically to you, Sir, for having elected me by acclamation to this very important function.

In that context, I should like to say that I consider the election a great honour, not only for me personally, but for my country, a permanently neutral country, as the Commission knows. I assure all colleagues present that I will try to conduct the business of this very important deliberative body in the field of disarmament to the best of my ability and experience, taking into account the points of view of all delegations participating in this body.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to proceed now to the election of other members of the Bureau: 8 Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur for 1991. In that connection, I wish to announce that the Group of Asian States has endorsed the candidacy of Pakistan for a vice-chairmanship of the Commission. The Latin American and Caribbean Group has endorsed the candidacy of Ecuador and Peru for a

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(The Chairman)

vice-chairmanship of the Bureau. The Group of Western European and Other States has endorsed the candidacy of Germany for a vice-chairmanship of the Commission.

If I hear no comment, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect the representatives of the aforementioned countries as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission for 1991 by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The next issue is the election of the Rapporteur of the Commission for 1991. The candidate for that post should come from the Group of Asian States. I am pleased to report that the Group has nominated Mr. Bahman Naimi Arfa of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the office of Rapporteur of the Commission for 1991.

If I hear no comment, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Bahman Naimi Arfa of the Islamic Republic of Iran as Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission for 1991 by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Bahman Naimi Arfa of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his election as Rapporteur of the Commission. I am sure that he will make an important contribution to the work of the Commission in 1991.

As for the other officers of the Commission, I understand that consultations are under way within the regional groups concerned to select candidates for vice-chairmanship of the Commission for 1991. Therefore, I intend to convene another plenary meeting at a later date so that the various regional groups concerned may be able to nominate their candidates. As representatives may recall, the Commission must, in accordance with the reform programme which it adopted, elect all of the officers of the Commission at the organizational session, so as to facilitate the work of the Commission at its substantive session next year.

Mr. MAHMOOD (Pakistan): I should like to begin by expressing our pleasure at seeing you, Sir, as Chairman of the Commission once again. I would like to convey, through you, the thanks of my delegation to all the members of the Disarmament Commission for electing Pakistan by acclamation as one of the Vice-Chairmen for the 1991 session of the Commission.

I would also like to take the opportunity to convey our thanks to all members of the Asian Group for endorsing our candidacy.

REVIEW OF THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-FIFTH SESSION RELATING TO THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

The CHAIRMAN: As members are aware, the General Assembly this morning adopted one resolution - resolution 45/62 B - that has direct relevance to the work of the Commission. For the sake of clarity and for the benefit of the members of the Commission, I shall now refer to resolution 45/62 B adopted by the General Assembly under item 60 (a) of its agenda, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission". Operative paragraphs 1 to 14 read as follows:

(The Chairman)

"1. Takes note of the annual report of the Disarmament Commission;

"2. Notes with appreciation that the Disarmament Commission has concluded its consideration of all substantive items on its agenda, except the item on objective information on military matters;

"3. Commends the Disarmament Commission for its adoption by consensus of the specific recommendations on the following subjects on its agenda: (a) South Africa's nuclear capability, (b) the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, (c) conventional disarmament and (d) the draft Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade;

"4. Also notes that the findings and recommendations contained in the report of the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission on the item regarding naval armaments and disarmament are endorsed by all participants in his consultations;

"5. Further notes that no consensus could be reached on specific recommendations for the item regarding various aspects of the arms race, particularly the nuclear-arms race and nuclear disarmament, as well as a general approach to negotiations on nuclear and conventional disarmament;

"6. Recalls the role of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues;

"7. Stresses the importance for the Disarmament Commission of working on the basis of a relevant agenda of disarmament topics, thereby enabling the Commission to concentrate its efforts and thus optimize its progress on specific subjects in accordance with resolution 37/78 H;

(The Chairman)

"8. Notes with satisfaction that the Disarmament Commission adopted by consensus a set of 'Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission' at its 1990 substantive session;

"9. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue its work in accordance with its mandate, as set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, and with paragraph 3 of resolution 37/78 H, and to that end to make every effort to achieve specific recommendations on the items on its agenda, taking into account the adopted 'Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission';

"10. Recommends that the Disarmament Commission, as a result of consultations, adopt at its 1990 organizational session the following substantive items for inclusion in the working agenda of the 1991 session of the Commission:

"(1) Objective information on nuclear matters.

"(2) Progress of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

"(3) Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security.

"(4) The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields.

"11. Also requests the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding four weeks during 1991 and to submit a substantive report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session;

(The Chairman)

"12. Requests the Secretary-General to transmit to the Disarmament Commission the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament, together with all the official records of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly relating to disarmament matters, and to render all assistance that the Commission may require for implementing the present resolution;

"13. Also requests the Secretary-General to ensure full provision to the Commission and its subsidiary bodies of interpretation and translation facilities in the official languages, and to assign, as a matter of priority, all the necessary resources and services to this end;

"14. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-sixth session the item entitled 'Report of the Disarmament Commission'." (resolution 45/62 B)

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE 1991 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

The CHAIRMAN: In the preparation of the draft provisional agenda for the substantive session to be held in April 1991, account has been taken of the relevant resolution adopted by the General Assembly, whose operative part I read out a moment ago. For the convenience of members of the Commission, the elements of the draft provisional agenda have been included in conference room paper A/CN.10/1990/CRP.11, copies of which have been distributed to all members.

In this connection, I wish to point out that in that document items 4 to 7 are the substantive agenda items for next year which were agreed upon by members of the Commission. Therefore those items were included in resolution 45/62 B, which was adopted by the General Assembly without a vote this morning.

I invite members of the Commission to make comments on the draft provisional agenda.

Mr. NOREEN (Sweden): Allow me first of all to convey my delegation's warmest congratulations to Ambassador Hohenfellner on his election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for next year. My delegation looks forward to working under his guidance. We think it fitting indeed that he should be elected Chairman of the Commission during this period of change and reform, given the important and constructive role he has played in the reform process - if I may use that term.

Regarding the draft provisional agenda, I should like to come back to an issue my delegation raised on a number of occasions during the round of informal consultations organized by the Chairman - that is, the question of a working agenda and a general agenda. My delegation believes that the distinction between a general agenda and a working agenda should be maintained. That distinction was embraced by the Commission itself in the reform package, "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", which was formally adopted both by the Commission and by the General Assembly.

(Mr. Noreen, Sweden)

At this stage, of course, there is no agreement on what a general agenda should contain, and my delegation does not intend to press for a decision on that question now. However, we do think that it is useful to retain the notion of a general agenda and a working agenda. My delegation's understanding, therefore, is that the four substantive agenda items on the draft provisional agenda that has been circulated will indeed form the working agenda for the 1991 substantive session, in accordance with the language used in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly earlier today.

The CHAIRMAN: The Chair has taken note of the statement of the representative of Sweden.

Mr. JAIN (India): We would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this first organizational meeting for the 1991 session of the Disarmament Commission. My delegation is pleased to see you presiding today. We are also happy to support the election of Ambassador Hohenfellner of Austria as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the 1991 session. His positive, constructive and balancing contribution to the Disarmament Commission has helped it to reach satisfactory conclusions in the past, and my delegation has no doubt that under his chairmanship the Disarmament Commission will continue to work in the same positive manner as it has done under your chairmanship.

I would likely briefly to support the statement just made by the representative of Sweden. In a real sense, today is the first meeting of the Disarmament Commission under the new dispensation and scheme of things agreed in the document on ways and means earlier this year, and it would indeed be desirable to implement the various understandings that were reached in the agreement reflected in that document. My delegation is of the view that we should make a distinction from the very outset between the working agenda and the general

(Mr. Jain, India)

agenda. The items to go into the general agenda could be a matter for consultations, and the general agenda could be established later. The distinction, however, should be made right from the beginning, in order to preserve the concept that was agreed upon.

The CHAIRMAN: I think that all members are aware of the distinction between the general agenda and the working agenda. It is set forth in section 3 of the adopted reform programme, which states that the Disarmament Commission could have a general agenda and a working agenda for each substantive session, but that the working agenda should be agreed at the Commission's organizational session, that is - as both the representative of Sweden and the representative of India have indicated - the general agenda is a not a matter that has to be decided on now.

Mr. STEFANINI (France) (interpretation from French): My delegation would first of all like to thank you for having convened this meeting of the Disarmament Commission, and especially for having been kind enough to take into account all the other demands on our time by postponing it until this afternoon.

My delegation accepts the draft general programme of work that is before us in conference room paper A/CN.10/1991/CRP.11.

The CHAIRMAN: If there is no objection, I shall take it that the draft provisional agenda for the 1991 substantive session, A/CN.10/1990/CRP.11, is approved.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: As delegations are aware, the agreement on these four substantive items is the result of a number of informal meetings of the Commission, as well as of rather extensive consultations among interested delegations. During the course of those consultations many delegations expressed concern with regard to the wide scope of certain items, particularly item 5, relating to nuclear disarmament, and item 7, regarding science and technology in the field of

(The Chairman)

international security and disarmament. They underlined the importance of some focal points for those items in order to narrow down the scope to certain essential issues under the subject for extensive elaborations. They pointed out that, with the topics emphasized, consensus agreement could possibly be reached on specific recommendations on the items within the limited time-frame of three years, in accordance with the provision of the reform programme that was adopted. It would therefore be advisable for the next Chairman of the Commission and the chairmen of the working groups on those items to conduct consultations prior to the substantive session in order to identify specific topics under those subjects for deliberation in the Commission's subsidiary bodies. I am sure that the chairmen of the subsidiary bodies will refer to this matter during their forthcoming consultations on the respective agenda items.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

The CHAIRMAN: I would now like to turn to item 6 on today's provisional agenda, "Organizational matters", including the establishment of subsidiary bodies and the appointment of chairmen of the subsidiary bodies, as well as the adoption of the date, duration and programme of work for the 1991 substantive session.

Since the Disarmament Commission has agreed on four substantive items for the working agenda of the 1991 substantive session, it may wish, as a standard practice, to establish four working groups to deal with those four subjects.

(The Chairman)

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Disarmament Commission wishes to establish the following subsidiary bodies:

(a) The Committee of the Whole, to deal with items 8 and 9 and, informally, with any other relevant issues;

(b) Working Group I, to deal with item 4, entitled "Objective information on military matters";

(c) Working Group II, to deal with item 5, entitled "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons";

(d) Working Group III, to deal with item 6, entitled "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security";

(e) Working Group IV, to deal with item 7, entitled "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields".

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The Commission has also to appoint the respective chairmen of the four working groups, and decide who will chair which group on a particular item.

In this regard, I should like to draw the attention of members to the provision in section 4, subparagraph 1, of document A/CN.10/137, entitled "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", which reads in part:

"... The allocation of the agenda items to the four subsidiary bodies ... should be decided at the organizational session of the Commission, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution."

I understand that extensive consultations are in progress among the five regional

(The Chairman)

groups. Therefore, I propose that the Commission take up the appointment of the chairmen of the subsidiary bodies at the next plenary meeting. If I hear no objection I shall take it that the Commission wishes to proceed in this manner.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The next question is the date and duration of the 1991 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. As members may recall, the Conference on Disarmament decided to divide its 1991 session into three parts. The first part will end on 28 March 1991. The Preparatory Committee for the Third Review Conference of the biological weapons Convention will hold its session from 8 to 12 April 1991. Therefore, the Commission may wish to schedule its 1991 substantive session after those dates.

Moreover, it is my understanding that there will be other disarmament activities during the week of 15 to 19 April 1991. Therefore, it might be advisable to schedule the 1991 substantive session of the Commission from 22 April to 13 May 1991 for a period of three weeks and one day, as tentatively agreed at our last consultation meeting held on Friday, 30 November 1990.

If there is no objection, the 1991 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will be held from 22 April to 13 May 1991.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: Regarding the programme of work for the 1991 substantive session, the Secretariat has prepared a draft programme of work, contained in conference room paper A/CN.10/1991/CRP.1, which has been circulated to you. Of course, this programme is only indicative and is subject to change if necessary.

Ms. TAYLOR (United Kingdom): Just a thought on the programme of work. I know that in the past, in informal meetings, my delegation has raised the question whether, given the rationalized nature of our work during the Disarmament Commission - the fact that we will have only four items to deal with in working

(Ms. Taylor, United Kingdom)

groups - it would, in fact, benefit delegations and be generally beneficial if only one working group was to sit at one time. Clearly, we are a delegation that is somewhat larger, generally, than others. Therefore, this is certainly not something that I or my delegation would insist on if there was a contrary view expressed by other delegations. It may be a point about which members would like to reflect in the weeks and months that lie ahead. But I am raising it now, before we actually go ahead and adopt a programme, just in case other delegations have views on this.

The CHAIRMAN: I call upon the Secretary of the Commission to clarify the issue.

Mr. LIN Kuo-chung (Secretary of the Commission): In response to the question raised by the representative of the United Kingdom, I wish to state that, as in the past, the Disarmament Commission has meeting resources for only two teams of interpreters and two large rooms to accommodate four working groups. In the past, we normally had six or seven, and sometimes eight subsidiary bodies to cover and each time we had two simultaneous meetings. If only one meeting were held at a time, this would reduce the frequency of the meetings of working groups. It is up to the Commission to decide whether to have just one meeting at a time or to have two working groups meeting simultaneously.

The CHAIRMAN: As I said earlier, the programme of work is indicative and subject to change. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt its programme of work for the 1991 substantive session, as contained in conference room paper A/CN.10/1991/CRP.1, on the understanding that it is subject to change if necessary.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.

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26 December 1990

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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 19 December 1990, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. SILOVIC (Yugoslavia)

- Election of the Chairman and other Officers for 1991
- Statement by the Secretary

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The meeting was called to order at 12 noon.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND OTHER OFFICERS FOR 1991

The CHAIRMAN: Owing to his absence on an important mission abroad, the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, Ambassador Nana Sutresna of Indonesia, has asked me to chair this meeting with a view to advancing the business of the current organizational session. As members may recall, at our last meeting, held on 4 December, we considered and took decisions on almost all matters related to the next substantive session of the Commission, to be held from 22 April to 13 May 1991, except for two issues: first, completion of the election of officers for 1991 and, secondly, the appointment of Chairmen of subsidiary bodies.

In that connection, I am pleased to announce that as a result of consultations the following regional groups have nominated their candidates for vice-chairmanships of the Commission for 1991:

The Group of African States has reached agreement on proposing Cameroon for one of the vice-chairmanships; consultations are still under way on a candidate for the second vice-chairmanship from the African group.

The Group of Eastern European States has endorsed the candidatures of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and the Republic of Poland for vice-chairmanships of the Commission.

As there is no comment, I take it that the Commission wishes to elect the representatives of those countries as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission for 1991, by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: One vice-chairmanship, from the African Group, remains to be filled.

I should like to express my warm congratulations to the Vice-Chairmen who have been elected to their important posts.

(The Chairman)

The next matter is the appointment of chairmen of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission. As a result of extensive consultations within and among the regional groups, I am pleased to announce the following:

The Group of Eastern European States has endorsed the candidature of Ambassador Andre Erdös of Hungary for the chairmanship of Working Group I on objective information on military matters.

The Group of African States has agreed to propose the candidature of a representative of Egypt to the chairmanship of Working Group II, on the process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons. The African Group will be in a position at a later stage to announce the name of the person who will chair that working group.

It is established practice that the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission should chair the Committee of the Whole to deal in an informal manner with all matters relating to the work of the Commission. The chairmanship for 1991 will fall to the Group of Western European and Other States.

As there is no objection to those arrangements, I take it that the Disarmament Commission wishes to make those appointments to the chairmanships of the Commission's subsidiary bodies for 1991.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that consultations are still under way among the regional groups concerned on the endorsement of candidates for the chairmanships of Working Groups III and IV of the Disarmament Commission in 1991. I therefore intend to convene another plenary meeting, on Friday, 21 December, to conclude this organizational session. As members are aware, in accordance with the

(The Chairman)

adopted "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", the Commission must complete the appointment of chairmen of its subsidiary bodies for next year. I appeal to the regional groups concerned to expedite their nomination of candidates for the remaining chairmanships of subsidiary bodies.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, who will make a statement on the question of meeting services.

Mr. LIN (Secretary of the Commission): I have been requested by the Secretariat's Department of Conference Services to provide members of the Disarmament Commission with the following statistical information regarding the utilization of the conference servicing resources available to the Commission at its 1990 substantive session.

The 1990 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission was held from 7 to 29 May, a period of three weeks plus one working day. A total of 61 meetings was planned; thus, 183 hours with full meeting services were made available to the Commission. Because of the adoption in advance of the Commission's programme of work, no meeting was cancelled during the entire period.

(Mr. Lin)

As to the utilization of services in terms of hours, the following facts should be noted. According to the statistical report provided by the Department of Conference Services, 48 hours and 10 minutes were not used owing to late starting of meetings and 36 hours and 40 minutes were not used owing to early ending of meetings. This makes a total of 84 hours and 50 minutes in which full meeting services were not utilized because of late starting and early ending of meetings.

In percentage terms, the rate of utilization of conference servicing resources available at the 1990 substantive session of the Commission was approximately 55 per cent. However, it should be pointed out that this rate did not reflect the long hours of extensive consultations in which seven subsidiary bodies were engaged on various subjects during the session.

As a high, politically oriented disarmament machinery, the Commission depends a great deal upon informal consultations for the solution of controversial issues before it. It seems to be evident that the successful conclusion of almost all substantive agenda items and the adoption of a number of concrete recommendations on four items by consensus at the 1990 substantive session may well overshadow the somewhat unfavourable rate of utilization of meeting services.

The CHAIRMAN: As I have already said, the next meeting of the organizational session will be held on Friday, 21 December, at 10.30 a.m. I again urge the regional groups to conclude their consultations, both inside the groups and between them, so that we may fill all the remaining empty posts.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.